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THE NEW APPLICANTS
FOR THE PLACE MADE VACANT BY THE
DISESTABLISHED CHURCH

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Among the things always named to show that we are getting on is that we have disestablished the church which means that we have no religion that is official with us. About our only familiarity with the word is in English politics. Disestablishment is still an infant of days, while establishment has been the usual thing from the first records we have of religion on the Nile and the Tigris. Our generation says, "What is establishment in religion?" Almost all those back of us would have said, "What other kind of religion could there be but established religion?" There was government religion as there was a government army, government money and government roads. It was paid for, regulated and required by the government. Being a citizen of that country was being of the religion of that country.

We gather from contemporary report that it is understood that established religion, the alliance of church and state, is one of the sinister inventions of the Catholic Church. This church points out that there happen to be more Protestant countries now that have this union of church and state than Catholic countries. Protestant churches, when they are established, are real state churches, that is, the ruler of the country is the head of the church. What is called a state church in Catholic countries is a working agreement between the government and the church, called a Con-

cordat. The complaint in France and Mexico now is that these governments at the instigation of economic radicals have repudiated the agreement. When the first Catholic church came into being it was not strange to Jew, Greek, nor Roman, that it be an established affair. Established religion over a whole country is just as much a Protestant practice and theory as it is Catholic, Mohammedan, Hebrew, Greek, Roman, Persian, Assyrian, Babylonian, or Egyptian.

We did not disestablish the church in the state easily or quickly in this country and it has not been very long since we did disestablish it. We read that in 1649 this law was passed in New York, "No other religion shall be publicly admitted but the Reformed." Citizenship required professing Christianity, faith in God and Jesus Christ. In 1705 New York voted that only Episcopal churches should receive tax support. In 1649 Maryland voted, "Unitarians, Jews, and those who deny the Trinity shall be punished with death and confiscation of property." The fine is named for words spoke against the Virgin Mary. In 1851, only seventy-four years ago, Maryland permitted Jews to hold office only on condition that they declare their belief in a future state of rewards and punishments. The Great Law of Pennsylvania required a confession of belief in Almighty God. One had to be a Christian to vote. From 1700 to the Revolution the state of Pennsylvania required an office-holder to repudiate the Mass and the Virgin Mary and to profess belief in the Trinity and the inspiration of the Bible. In 1790 a law was passed that required those holding office to believe in God and a state of rewards and punishments. In 1918 this law was still in force, and, remembering Pennsylvania office-holders we

infer that this belief has not deterred them very much. In 1701 the Episcopal Church was made the established church in North Carolina. No one could teach in that state who did not have a certificate from the Bishop of London. Baptists and Presbyterians could not perform marriages. The fine was fifty pounds. In 1776 in that state only Protestants could hold office, no Catholics, Jews, Unitarians, or infidels. In 1835, only ninety years ago, "Christian" was substituted for "Protestant." Virginia, in 1611, passed a law condemning to death any one who denied the Trinity. The fine was two thousand pounds of tobacco for not having a child baptized. James Madison said that there were six Baptist ministers in jail in one county in Virginia in 1774 for preaching. In 1779 the Episcopal church was disestablished in Virginia through the efforts of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison who said it was the hardest fight of their lives.

We recall this background so that we may see that disestablishment of the church is not something that everybody just naturally accepts. The whole history of the world is witness that it is not just naturally accepted and it was not just naturally accepted here. It was with the greatest difficulty, after the most bitter discussion and only through shrewd political maneuvering of the most eloquent of pleaders that the church was disestablished in the state legislatures in this country. It was not one church all over the country in all the colonies. It was this church here and another there. They wanted the help of the state to pay their bills, to propagate their doctrine and to enforce their morality.

What is the theory of establishment? It is this. It is good for every citizen, for his human welfare and his

eternal soul, to have true religion. This ought to be provided in a large way at public expense and required of citizens when furnished. This will require a religious department in the government to manage this important matter of providing true religion for all of its citizens.

Now, when we understand establishment we see that it is something to which our time is not at all hostile, but quite friendly. Our time is not adverse to the idea of establishment. To say that government ought to provide what is good for the citizens; this is good, therefore the government ought to establish it, pay for it, have a department for it, make it operate uniformly over all and make it part of being a citizen, this idea of establishment is not a stranger to us.

The only difference seems to be on what ought to be established. The Church ought to be disestablished, and it has been, but now a dozen applicants come, saying, "You have disestablished religion and you have done well. Establish us now, in its stead, and you will do well. Established religion, you see, did not bring in the kingdom of God, but, if you will establish what we want established, it will bring in the kingdom of God."

Material science is the most successful applicant thus far. A visitor to our world from past centuries would say, "I observe that you have established scientific doctrine in place of religious doctrine. You do not provide, pay for, and require the doctrines of religion but you do provide, pay for, and require subscription to scientific doctrines." Science, it is complained now, is so established that dissenters from the doctrine feel the hand of government upon them just as the old heretics did who dissented from the established doctrines of the

church. We are stating what they say who object to this new establishment. They say that science has been able to get herself in government so that she is now just as official as a state church ever was. One might have some liberty of private interpretation now about a religious doctrine but not about a scientific doctrine. They say that they think this is well as long as this established science keeps itself to wheat rust, boll weevil, gypsy moth, tree-borers, anthrax and mouth diseases. They agree it is well to have this part of science established, for, one heretic in a neighborhood, who would not conform to the scientific doctrine in these things, would bring disaster upon all. There are still those who claim the right of dissent against established science in vaccination, in what they should do for their health, and in eugenic matters. Those who object say that they now have about the position of an infidel in a state church. While we look favorably upon the establishment by the state of scientific doctrine, we are just pointing out that science has gone far in taking the place vacated by the disestablished church. A scientific doctrine ought to be quite sure of itself; know clearly what to do and how to do it, before it is enforced upon all citizens as an establishment. So, in a score of fields now we have established science, a department of government, with those to carry it out, appointed and paid just as the clergy are in an established church.

The whole philosophy of establishment of the church in the state is that a thing which every one needs as much as he needs organized religion should not be left to the chance of his getting it or of his not getting it. But the citizen might say, "I am peculiarly constituted so that I do not want any kind of organized religion,

or I do not happen to like the standardized thing provided by the state." To both of these the state answers, "This is good for you. Do not be troublesome. Take what is required of all."

One of the most likely and ambitious applicants now for establishment is Education. Established education means just what an established church means. It is a department of the national government; it is manned and managed from one center; it is paid for from the national treasury and it gives one standard for all. It sees that the citizen gets this that is good for him, for it is established over him. But one might say, "I have some ideas about the education of my own children," or, "We here locally have our own plan for education which we should like to use. It is a conviction of ours." The answer is the answer of the established church in religion, "We allow no dissent, no heresy, no private judgment and no local convictions. If you doubt the established education, you are no better than those chapel people in England, those non-conformists, those heretics, who have their own ideas in religion. We tolerate no dissent in education." We have a letter from our minister in Portland, Oregon, in which he makes mention of his concern over the Oregon law, closing all but public schools. What he looks for, and fears most, is an effort to get an amendment to the state constitution, then to the constitution of the nation, making it impossible for any school except the public to function. Join this with other national educational programs for establishment now in the air and we should have a condition in which dissent in education would feel the quick hand of the law. It says that no individual or no company is to have any private judg-

ment against established education for that is good for all. The established church never went farther than that, and seldom as far.

The chief advantage of an established church is that it controls education. The established church is the established school. It makes but little difference which comes first. If we get established education here directly we are going to get the established church indirectly. We shall have religion established over us step by step. It will not be called by that name. It will be called morality; it will be called protecting the child from dangerous knowledge; it will be called everything but what it is, somebody's religious doctrine established, not through a national church but through what is a great deal more effective, a national school that brooks no dissent.

The compelling argument for the established church, in the minds of those who believe in it, has been that it compels those who might sink lower, if they were left a choice in the matter, to hold up. The established church says, "We are sorry that it is hard on you dissenters to be held down, for you might have your little groups in which you might have a better religion than that established by the state over all. But we cannot think of you. We have to think of those who might choose worse. We must think of those who would just be low down infidels, atheists, godless and immoral people of every sort, those who would not have any church, if we did not establish one over them."

This is just the argument for every kind of establishment whether the place of the church now in government is to be taken by education, or child welfare, or mother welfare, or health, or hygiene, or any one of the

score of humanitarian enterprises which now, with determined programs, are seeking national establishment. They all say, "We are bound to think not of those who might do better with a little local liberty and private judgment in education, in looking after their own children, in being mothers in their own way, but of those who might do worse, if not put under an establishment."

No one now would venture to work for the establishment of the Christian religion directly or any branch of it. Most would say that they cannot expect to do this, but that they can hope to establish it here a little and there a little. Here is morality, for example. Men cannot establish the Christian doctrines but they can establish Christian morality. Now there is one kind of morality that ought to be established in government. Murder, stealing, interfering with the mails and counterfeiting our money, order demands that morality with respect to these things be established. Then there is another kind of morality which is held by some groups of Christians as good doctrines of theirs. All Christian bodies would not agree with all the demands and denials of this morality which is insisted upon by some Christian bodies of the stricter sort. They say that this morality of some Christians may be good for those who believe it, in conscience, but, it is not necessary for the proper functioning of government that it be established over all.

But the Christian morality of this stricter sort can say, "We ought to establish our very Christian morality in the country." So it goes out to the churches and says, "You are a Christian Church, are you not? You believe in Christian morality, do you not? You want

to give this good Christian morality to all, do you not? Here are things that people eat, drink, teach, read, see, ways they amuse themselves, all of which we good Christian people, with our kind of morality, do not do. Do you not think it would be a fine Christian bit of work if we should establish this morality in government? We cannot get our doctrines established but maybe we can establish our kind of Christian morality." This kind of argument appeals, and they say, "Of course we will help establish it." And they do help and they usually can do it.

The church with its doctrines are more established with us now along some lines than they are in the Great Britain with an avowedly established church. What is called good Christian doctrine about what is right to do or to teach, feels the helping hand of establishment more with us than in countries with established churches. Men from abroad tell us that establishment would not dare attempt with them, in thought or in morals, what is now attempted and done with us. Establishment of a church can come step by step under other names as well as at all at once under its own name.

It is no coincidence that every candidate for establishment, in place of the established church, goes first to the churches for support. Every kind of establishment whether it is in morals, in education, to establish the child, the mother, the labor man, or the farmer, goes at once to the churches to accomplish it. It is called a Christian program. It is not only that church people are interested in good things for human welfare, it is also because church people lean toward the idea of establishment. Whether it is official Catholicism in Europe, or official Protestantism in America, the whole

long fight to disestablish the church shows that both branches of the church have given up the established church in the state with considerable pain. Church people help not only because they are interested in good works but also because this is another method of establishing their disestablished church.

With all but about sixty of our four hundred and thirty-five representatives, in the law-making body of the nation, registered as good orthodox Christians; with two hundred, of these four hundred and thirty-five votes, in the hands of four of the most militant Protestant denominations with political ambitions of their own and some fear of other religionists; with Protestantism over represented, two and one-half times, as compared with Catholics, one can see that almost any form of establishment is likely to win if thrown into the political arena for decision.

Now that we are thinking establishment, it might be well to see what the experience of the church has been. The established church said, "Things move, O so slowly, working only with spiritual instruments. Could we not hasten things a little by getting the arm of government to help? Give us a little legal authority as churchmen and we could command and would not have to preach and to plead so much." But the experience is that when the church got the secular arm, her spiritual arm weakened. She did not use it so much. She used her secular arm instead. She got to be a good politician and a poor churchman. This is almost inevitable when the church leaves her spiritual forces, which are slow, to use the legal forces instead which make it appear she is doing more when she is not. She gains the world and loses her own soul.

The argument against church establishment, in the minds of the church now, is that it is the repudiation of spiritual forces for those of the world. It is a pagan thought and practice and is historically a denial of the whole Christian philosophy which is faith in the potency of spiritual instruments to produce spiritual ends. The established church idea is a confession of belief in the impotency of spiritual means without the aid of the arm of secular government. The Christian philosophy is that men shall be free by a process of deliverance from bondage. Lusts of the flesh, the mind, the tongue, things that war against the soul, are that bondage. The fruits of the spirit are self-control, steadfastness, love, joy, and all the rest, things against which there is no law. The Christian philosophy deals with a leavening power that can operate under any government, never implores the aid of any government, and is potent to redeem men in some mysterious way. This is the Christian philosophy and faith in spiritual means is the mark of the Christian philosophy and of the Christian church. And faith in the secular arm, as an ally or as a substitute, is the Christian philosophy paganized down to the level of an ancient practice, which did not depend on spiritual means but did depend upon government help.

Now the end of all our establishment today is to hasten the moral forces which work, O so slowly. Moral forces say, "Give us the aid of secular government and we shall not have to plead and to urge so much. We can command." Establishment is sought today to hurry up moral reforms and is a confession of belief in the impotency of moral forces. Establishment with us too is to connect with the public treasury for

the support of moral forces, as the church connected with the public treasury for the support of her spiritual forces.

There is certain virtue that goes out of the church when she enters into the political alliance. It is a marriage for ease and convenience. No well wisher of the church today would renew the connection. There is something that goes out of a moral reform when it makes alliance with the state. It ceases to be either moral or a reform about in proportion as it becomes official, officious and legal. These establishments, which are now seeking the place of the disestablished church as the spouse of the state, might well consider the experience of the church as the spouse of the state. In the high court of human experience the church has been given legal separation, even complete divorce; has taken her own name; lives her own life, works with her own means to her own ends which are not the means of the state nor the ends of the state. Other candidates for establishment might well profit by the history of this union.

